



1969 May Day Speech on the World Congress of the Fourth International

(Ross Dowson speaking to a rally of the League for Socialist Action in Vancouver, BC)

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Dowson: *(introduction in progress)* . . . in Canada today, it's the workers in Air Canada Corporation, and they have been on strike for a short while, and I was unable to get a flight out here, and I rode the cushion, and it was rather uncomfortable, for some 48 hours. I did make an effort to get into the plane of the late William Randolph Hurst. He had a private plane built for himself some years ago - a very elaborate Super DC3 with an elaborate bar and all the appurtenances that this man, one of the moguls of American capitalism and the so-called Father of the Yellow Press *(laughs from the audience)* . This plane has been put into action in order to ferry persons who want to travel across Canada, and I put a bid in to get a seat but unfortunately all the planes were directed one way; they were all directed Toronto to Ottawa, they weren't directed from Toronto to Vancouver; and I had to admit when it was brought to my attention that it seemed somewhat logical that the parliamentary democratic institutions in Ottawa should be kept in constant touch with the real rulers of this country, who are ensconced in Bay Street and Yonge Street; and so I was deprived of this opportunity of travelling this way.

This wasn't my first experience with Air Canada, in this, what you might call, a relatively small strike. You know with the development of modern technology, myth has it that the workers are less and less important. In the period of Winnipeg *(the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike -ed.)* , you know, when most of us were mechanics on the lowest plane, there was no sophisticated industry and technology, workers were very essential. But now the story is that with mechanization, with computers and other levels of modern technology, workers aren't very important. However, I must say that I felt the power of that very small number of workers who were involved in the strike of Air Canada. As a matter of fact, it is by no means a Canadian strike; it took on very quickly not only national implications but international implications - very very quickly.

I was in Europe; I hadn't heard of the strike and I came to make my reservations from Paris to go to Britain and then to Canada, and they told me - they didn't say that the workers are very essential in modern technology - but they told me there are no planes *(laughter from audience)* going from Britain to Canada. There were only a few - I think BOAC, which was on strike on my way over *(laughter)* now was operating, but Air Canada was not operating, and therefore I was compelled to recognize the very key and strategic power of this very small number of workers in Canada, and the implications of their struggle on an international scale. And I was forced to return to Canada via the United States. I couldn't come from Britain.

And on my arrival there, I was made aware of - I told you about the power of the working class - I was made aware of some unfinished business, yet, on this continent. On arriving there, I was informed that I am on the barred list of Canadians who cannot enter the United States. I came in with a bunch of German and Swiss visitors and they went through all the books and I gather my name's on there on this Roll of Honour of Canadians who are not allowed to go into the United States. I took some comfort from that; I am always an optimist - I am known by some to be an incurable optimist - and I took some comfort in that, although it was uncomfortable, in the feeling that you know it is sort of a testimony that American capitalism is not so powerful. Here am I, just one person, and now I am 51 years of age, not in

the swing of some of the younger comrades now, and they were very worried about me, coming into the United States, and it gave you a sense of power, in a sense, not attributable to myself, but the weakness of American capitalism, that they worried about my entry. I was only going to stay overnight, you see (laughter) and take the next plane, but they were very worried about me staying there, and they looked after me. I felt you know that, boy, American capitalism is very weak. (. . .)

You might say (. . .) it was an incident that has no importance, but I must say you are wrong again. You see I was put in the hands of an escort. Suddenly I was told there are no flights; you can't make that flight that you were booked in, and we are going to look after you; we're going to get another flight for you; but in the meantime you will have to be put up into a hotel near La Guardia airport. Suddenly a young man appeared at my side, picked up my bag - I was feeling like a bourgeois (laughter) you know, and I thought this fellow was just part of the service, but he was part of a very select service (laughter) - he was part of the Immigration Department it turned out, and he asked me what had I done? Who was I? Because suddenly he became an official escort, for me. Well I told him a little bit - I speculated what it was about, and it turned out he was an Egyptian; he had only been in the U.S. a couple of years, so I had a little discussion with him; he was an anti-Zionist - really he (appeared to be) an anti-Semite - but I got talking to him and I ascertained he was an anti-Zionist; he wasn't an anti-Semite. He was an Arab revolutionary. I told him I was a supporter of El Fatah, the guerrilla forces that have developed within the Egyptian revolution, and he was extremely friendly to me (laughter from audience) . As a matter of fact we had several long discussions - he was supposed to be my escort and we had several long friendly discussions and he didn't want to bother about looking after me; he thought we should go down and do the town (laughter) but I didn't have any money - so we just had some discussions.

It turned out that while he was my escort, it was myself that had to wake him up to see that I got on the plane. He was supposed to sleep with me and see that I didn't escape (laughter) into the great American hinterland and subvert some American workers. I thought it was a very interesting experience and being a firm internationalist I send him the issue of the International Socialist Review that had an excellent article on the nature of the Palestinian struggle, I sent him a statement by the Israeli-Arabic Socialist Organization, and I sent him the address of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States, and I hope that little episode might prove useful (laughter) to the socialist revolution.



May Day: a day of celebration of our international solidarity

At any rate, to get to the basic theme of our meeting here tonight, I was thinking what should I say to this assembly of workers - I see some of you are professional people who have some identity with the working class movement, who realize after all that you are part of the working class movement; what should I say to you as a guest speaker on this very important day celebrating the concept of international labor solidarity. I confess I was somewhat at a loss because the topic is very very broad, it has infinite possibilities. You know May Day - it was emphasized by the comrade who spoke about the historic evolution of May Day, but May Day has been the day that has been dedicated by all those who understand its significance and who have participated in it in the past, as a day dedicated to the demonstration of the fighting unity of the working class against capitalism - that's the nature of that day.

That's the good gesture that symbolizes the nature of May Day. It's a day of protest against the conditions which capitalism has imposed upon the working class of this country, and on international working class movements. And of course we all know how those conditions are reflected in our own lives - scarcity of housing, inflation, taxes - I assume you have all filled your income tax forms out, that are due - they're overdue, I hope you have filled them out (laughter) you're going to have to pay extra on it - and the sum total of the conditions that exist in our society. When we realize what's possible in society, we come to the realization that what stands in the way of our having the benefits of the potential that comes with the development of modern technology, we know that this comes from capitalism, the class nature of society.

As a matter of fact it is this system that tends to make the lives of the great majority of the people on this continent and across the rest of the world where capitalism prevails, somewhat empty and somewhat futile. It is the identity with the

struggle against it which makes our lives vigorous and vital and purposeful, a great source of satisfaction to us all to be part of the world-wide struggle for social change. But you know when I came to think about what I would talk about, it came very sharply to my mind that I have been sort of inactive in the class struggle in this country for a while; I have been away for over a month; and generally I follow what's going on in Canada very closely and I felt a little uneasy about what I should talk about.

For instance, I went over to England and I had some plans about what I would like to do, and they didn't come to fruition. I wanted to attend a very important assembly which was held in Sheffield, England, an assembly of trade unionists, activists, militants and some secondary leaders of the trade union movement in Great Britain, and this assembly was designed, organized as a conference to discuss the most important question - the question of workers' control of industry. A very vital question - here we are, the ones that do all the work, do all the necessary labor in society, and here we stand in the words of the 'l'Internationale,' as outsiders, outcasts from the whole process of determining the very things which we're involved in, which involve our whole concept of the meaning and purposefulness of our lives. And I wanted to go to that conference, a conference on workers' control; I learned that it was a very successful conference. Over a thousand militants and trade union leaders participated in that action, and I thought it was a very significant action. As a matter of fact I read reports of it from a leading trade unionist from Czechoslovakia; and perhaps you know that it is the big issue there in Czechoslovakia, where the means of production have been nationalized, and there is an overall general plan, but even in Czechoslovakia while as a class the workers have power - there is no capitalist power - the working class stand outside, as we do, outside of determining the norms of production, outside of determining what (products will be) produced, the quality of production, the whole gamut; and I missed that, I missed that conference - so I lack an opportunity to talk to you about it, one of the most significant events taking place in our time - the discussion of this problem and the mobilization of forces to intervene in this important arena.



In Italy amid mass worker and student strikes and demonstrations

But I was in Italy; I got to Italy; I missed the English conference and I got to Italy. What can I tell you about Italy. I was there for some ten days, and it is my opinion, particularly in light of the developments in France in May-June '68 and recent events in Italy, that we are in a period of a pre-revolutionary character - in Italy. We have a situation where the social-democratic parties, the various formations of it, and the Communist Parties, in a period of extreme crisis of the capitalist ruling class, have proven unable and unwilling to intervene and give a revolutionary direction to the aspirations of the Italian people; and so there are great actions, and great demonstrations and mobilizations but no resolutions of the problems confronting the people of Italy. I was in Italy but unfortunately, I must report to you, I was unable to get a picture of what's going on. I don't read Italian; I picked up the newspapers and I must tell you, there's a great ferment going on there. I can read photographs, you know, not with much sophistication (*laughter*), and I could see that many, many actions were taking place there. For instance, I read that not far from where I was, in Milan and other areas of the northern industrial sector of Italy, not only were the workers involved in gigantic struggles against capitalism, but the prisoners in the biggest penitentiaries had moved out very boldly and attempted to take power in the penitentiaries, and in some way determine the conditions of their imprisonment, which is a very legitimate demand (. . .)

So I saw some of the pictures of demonstrations of students, who moved into some of the railway stations which are very strategic in Italy - people in Italy still travel by and large by rail - and the students had moved into these areas, instead of remaining up in Simon Fraser (*University, on Burnaby Mountain -ed.*), they moved in and took over the railway communications and thereby spread the power of their action right through the whole body of Italian capitalism. And of course just before I went there I read about how the workers in the towns just south of Naples had in essence taken control of their communities, driven the police out and carried out a very big struggle. But as I say I wasn't able to read Italian. As a matter of fact it was very embarrassing for a revolutionary socialist - my experience - at one time when I was travelling down from Milan to Rimini, we were held up on a railway car, and not having much confidence in the efficiency of capitalism, we were rather impatient about this delay. I only learned later however that we were involved in a general strike (*laughter*) and we just got marooned, and the strike was so powerful, so complete and so

absolute; there were no demonstrations, no one tried to acquaint us as to what was going on even if we were able to read the placards, etc.

However, I must say that my experience in Europe was not altogether lost as I come to the main theme of my talk. On the contrary, I was there to participate in a congress of an organization called the Fourth International, sometimes called by us the World Party of Socialist Revolution. This organization was formed by Leon Trotsky in 1938, and I went over there as a representative of the League for Socialist Action along with a couple of my co-thinkers, including the person who was originally billed to speak here, Art Y. I think it is very appropriate that tonight I should talk about the Fourth International. It might strike you as unusual, because the tradition is to talk about the broad aspects of the unity of the working class and here I am talking about a certain tendency, in a specific sector of the working class movement. However as I develop my theme, I think you will see that it is quite appropriate that I should do so.

The Fourth International, which is a **world** party of socialist revolution composed of representatives of the working class in all the major countries of the globe, is a movement that is dedicated to a struggle, in the tradition of May Day, in the classical tradition of the working class movement, to the struggle against all forms of oppression. And as you know, as you well know, our condition is not unique, the conditions under which we live in this country are not unique. We are what we would call in Marxist terminology, wage laborers - I think the phrase that was used in the Winnipeg General Strike was that we are wage **slaves** - and it's highly appropriate; I don't think we would take exception to the phrase used in the days of the Winnipeg General Strike which were somewhat more dramatic, but quite accurate. We are when you get down to it, wage slaves - the great proportion of us - we work for wages; we have no control over the means of production; we are subject to the whims and wishes of the owners of the means of production; we intervene on occasion, we have built up unions, but they are essentially defensive organizations and they haven't changed our essential status.

As I say the struggle that we are involved in is an international struggle. It's common not only to Canada, and the United States, but it's common to Britain. The great bulk of our counterparts in those countries, in Europe, are wage-laborers, and they suffer the inequities that come with capitalist ownership of the means of production and capitalist appropriation of the goods that come off the production line. And that's reflected in poor housing - that's an international phenomenon - I saw it in France and I saw it in Italy, it isn't just in Vancouver or Winnipeg where we pay exorbitant rents for very poor facilities, without any element of security. And they suffer from inflation; and if you think inflation's bad in Vancouver and other parts of Canada, and how it cuts into our wage pay envelope, it's a common phenomenon right across all the advanced sectors of the capitalist world. We suffer from pollution - I see pollution is a big issue in Vancouver - as it well should be; well it's a common phenomenon all across the world with a developed industrial society.

And there are areas of the world, just as in Canada, where capitalism is allowed to deteriorate sectors of the economy, just like areas in Nova Scotia and in Eastern Ontario; this is a common phenomenon in France, as I saw as I motored across France. There is racism and discrimination - all these by-products of capitalism - these are common, and permeate capitalism and affect conditions of the working class in all sectors of the advanced capitalist world. There are other forms, in other areas of the world, of course, in which the relationship of the workers to the rulers is somewhat different - I refer to the colonial sectors of the world. There capitalism has reached out, from its major sectors of control and development, and has imposed what we call imperialist rule - and that word is a very harsh word, which brings into our minds all kinds of images - we know there is famine in India while there is plenty of wheat on the Prairies, some of it going rotten, it hasn't even been harvested - I saw it as I came down - there's famine, people starving, in India. There is widespread illiteracy - people unable to read and write in any language, or the language of the community in which they live.

And there is the terrible record in Latin America. Fidel Castro, I think it was in the "Second Declaration of Havana," documented this very dramatically, the conditions of people in Latin America. And then of course, not an identical situation, but not unrelated, exists in those areas of the world where capitalism has been destroyed, where the means of production have been removed from the control of the capitalist class. There has developed a privileged clique - a bureaucratic clique - which has grown up on top of the economy in these areas of the world, and stands in the way of the full flowering of socialist democracy. And we know that's an essential part of the struggles in Hungary, what the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian people's revolt is about - they are attempting to establish a genuine and meaningful socialist democracy on the basis of the property relations that have been established by great revolutionary struggles.



Internationalism supreme at the World Congress

So what could be more appropriate since our situation is not unrelated, but is in many ways similar if not identical to the situation which confronts the great mass of the world's population? What could be more appropriate than we should talk about a movement which is composed of working people, men, women and youth, which is of an international working class character, the Fourth International? As a matter of fact, it is the only international working man's association. I am sure you have heard of some others who claim to be international working class organizations, but they don't have any real fibre and real content. This one does - it represents radicals, revolutionary socialists; persons who are involved energetically in the struggles of their class - persons who are committed to day-to-day struggle to remove oppression and to establish a new society, a socialist society.

At this congress at which I participated in Rimini, in Italy, just this last month, there was a rather modest gathering of persons - there were only ninety-five persons, not many more than in this room. They came from thirty different countries; it was quite a remarkable development - we all come from down the street here (in Vancouver), I am the only outsider - these persons came from thirty different countries. Most of them - a good many of them - were established leaders in their own countries - working class leaders, leaders in the trade union movement, leaders in the political movement; men and women of experience, and of long-time activity in the working class movement. Others - I would like to think that they are persons who are yet to become leaders of their class in their respective countries - I'm sure many of them will be.

Now everybody here knows - I think they know - the role of the LSA (*League for Socialist Action*) and the YS (*Young Socialists*) and the role that this movement plays in the struggle that's taking place across this country to mobilize opposition to Canadian complicity in the war in Vietnam. It don't think it's a secret and I'm not bringing this to your attention from the point of view of boasting or anything - I think it's an established fact - that a great many people in this country know that the League for Socialist Action and the Young Socialists, and our counterparts in Quebec, play a very very important role in this struggle - this most important struggle which is an essential aspect of May Day - solidarity with the struggles of workers of other countries - support of their struggle, and condemnation and action against the rulers of this country who participate in that (war) and play a very criminal role in the aggressive actions against the people of Vietnam.

One could I think almost say - again I don't say it from the point of view of boasting - one could say that without the League for Socialist Action and Young Socialists, the actions that have taken place in Canada would be more modest, not so successful as we would all like. As a matter of fact, when I was in Edmonton, I was shown a letter by Novakowski, the head of the NDY (*New Democratic Youth*), a very. . . extravagant letter of praise that he sent to the Young Socialists in Edmonton about their **unique** contribution in the struggle in Edmonton. In a hippy paper in Toronto I happened to see on the way out, called **Harbinger**, and they made quite a to-do about the fact that in Toronto the League for Socialist Action did **all** the work in the action in Toronto - did all the work, but also ridiculed (the LSA) because they did all the work and they also let other people speak and participate. But of course our work was in order to enable everybody to participate - that's what our contribution was - a contribution to make it possible to mobilize the largest mass of people possible against the war in Vietnam and Canadian complicity.

Well, I learned at the World Congress of the Fourth International that the experiences we are having in Canada and scope of our participation as revolutionary socialists in this crucial action, was not unique. The Socialist Workers Party in the United States played a somewhat parallel role, and that's understood by most persons who were involved in the antiwar movement in the United States. The Socialist Workers Party never supported the idea that American radicals should take off to Canada or Sweden or anywhere, but they should go with their class, and they should participate in the Army, in a big exchange with the working youth who are inducted in that army, to do the dirty work for American imperialism, and to tell them about their life, and to talk about the nature of the war, and educate them about the foul purpose of that war, and as you know, this has been the most successful action in the last while. The most significant aspect of the development of the anti-Vietnam war movement in the United States has been reaching into the Army

itself. A very new phenomenon, an unforeseen development, where in the midst of a war, there are thousands of troops in the American army who are demanding the right to talk about the nature of the war! And the justice of the war, and their involvement in that war. And the Socialist Workers Party played a very important role. But at the World Congress that wasn't just a North American phenomenon; I met the leaders of the anti-Vietnam war movement in Britain. I met a person some of you may know, Ernest Tate; another person some of you may know, Alan Harris; and I don't know what you thought of them here as effective activists, but I must tell you that everybody in Britain knows that they were the key element in the massive mobilization - much more massive than we've been able to carry - the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, a mobilization last October in London which brought out one hundred thousand - 100,000 - British people in a demonstration against the war in Vietnam.

And they of course are our co-thinkers. And that is true of France; it's true in nearly every sector of the world. Who was involved in this Congress? That type of person, who is dead serious about the concept of international solidarity of labor and highly involved in their own areas where they live, where they were born, where they continue to function in this type of action. There were ninety-five persons there; they came from thirty different countries. They had no state resources at their disposal. You know you hear of the big conferences of the international labor movement; usually they are filled with representatives who are on the gravy train; it's sort of a holiday hike, you know, off to Geneva, all expenses paid, and the boys who get the job are really not too very serious about what's involved - it is a holiday jaunt. But the persons who came (*to the FI Congress*) were persons who came under great difficulty, with very very limited resources - with great risk, because some of them came from countries where if you leave that country, and it's found out you went to such a gathering, you might not get back - as a matter of fact you might not get back to any country because when you get into Europe you find the very great importance of the passport, as a form of identity - we in this country do not have any real concept of what a key thing that is.

Some of them came from small groups, and some came from large groups. There were 44 delegates from 17 what we would call sections of the Fourth International; political formations, parties, of varying degrees, who have said "we agree with the basic program of the International, and we wish to be part of it. We declare that we want to participate in the debates and discussions, and we commit ourselves to implement the policies that are arrived at by that movement. We understand that the struggle is an international struggle and we want to be part of that struggle and we want to co-ordinate our struggle with the worldwide struggle." As I said they came at great risk from places like Greece, and Latin America; and I had an opportunity to discuss with them.



May Day lives on beyond the Second International. . . to the Fourth

And I would like to make another little diversion to legitimize the validity on my part to talk about the Fourth International tonight. You see, the young comrade here who told us about the background of May Day - of this great historical event we are celebrating - she told us it was declared an international day of labor solidarity by the **Second** International. You know, the concept of internationalism is not a new concept in the labor movement. As a matter of fact it was Karl Marx who initiated the **first** International Workingman's Association, which got into considerable difficulty as it was somewhat prematurely created, and it was only with the formation of the Second International, primarily under the sponsorship of Karl Marx's closest and most intimate collaborator, Frederick Engels, that we really got off the ground with an international workingman's association - the Second International. And it was the Second International that gave May Day, which commenced as a day of the American labor movement and the struggle for the 8-hour day - gave it a socialist and internationalist character, by declaring it the international labor day, the international socialist day, because the Second International declared itself very clearly and openly as a socialist international - which had taken on the task of establishing socialism on a world scale.

That International was destroyed; destroyed by its own leadership - **when**, they committed a terrible crime, by supporting their own ruling class, in the first imperialist World War. You had the leaders of this Second International, in the case of the German leadership, and the British leadership, and the French leadership, supporting their own bourgeoisie, and telling their own workers to involve themselves in this war, the First World War, and shoot the workers

of another country - participate in this criminal action. That destroyed the Second International - how could it be an "International" and support the war of its own ruling class? That destroyed that International.

But May Day lived on. That did not break up May Day - but it broke up the Second International - it became nothing, an empty hulk. It still exists but I am sure most of you have never heard of it. For your information, the NDP (*New Democratic Party*) has formally associated with the Second International, but I am sure hardly a member of the NDP is aware of it, because it plays no role in the operations of the NDP. It's a sort of a club, where Harold Wilson (*leader, British Labour Party*) and where what's-his-name, Willy Brandt (*leading West German social-democrat*) come together you know and talk about some matters which concern them and you can be sure only indirectly concern the working class of Germany and Great Britain. But May Day as I said continues to live on - with well-embedded fibre, a necessary expression of the needs of the working class of the world. In reality, it expresses the very substance of the working class struggle - that it is international because capitalism is international, because the workers produce for the world market; the workers are not part of a nation except insofar as they are manipulated in the interests of the ruling class.

But out of another great event, perhaps the greatest historic event, out of the great October Revolution in 1917, came another International - the Third International - so much that it expressed the essential needs of the working class, that one of the first acts of Lenin and Trotsky when the Second International betrayed its great proclaimed aims, was to declare the need for a new International - they organized the Third International. And it took up the struggle which the Second International had left aside. And we must say that it was through the efforts of the Third International, organized by Lenin and Trotsky, that May Day started to encompass broad layers of the working class - in Britain, in France, in Germany, and of course in Russia, in China and all these major countries. May Day took on the magnificent scope of a day of declaration of revolutionary purpose and a day of international solidarity. However, with the rise of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, this International was transformed, and in effect, destroyed. The Communist Parties, that had come out of the influence of the Russian Revolution and the impact it had on the thinking of revolutionary socialists all through the world; these Communist Parties, from being instruments of struggle against their own ruling class and attempting to establish socialism in their own (countries) - they became instruments of Soviet bureaucracy. Someone said they became "border guards" of Soviet bureaucracy.



The Stalinists outlaw unofficial May Day celebrations in France and Czechoslovakia

They had become lick-spittles and apologists, rationalists, for the regime that exists in the Soviet Union. And so today, we have a situation where many of the (May Day celebrations) have been outlawed in France; as one of our speakers said: "It's been outlawed by the French government," by the bourgeois government of France. But I must tell you, shocking as it may seem, that the Communist Party of France has acquiesced to that law, and agreed to it, and imposed the ban on its own forces - so we have May Day banned by the Communist Party of France! Banned by the CP in France. As a matter of fact a few weeks earlier I just happened to be shown the statement in the **Guardian** - a left hippy paper, a little better than that, more serious I suppose - they had an interesting article on some developments in France over the last month or so. There was a great rash of what are called "wildcat strikes;" as some of you who are acquainted with the labor movement here in Canada, that is a term which meant to ascribe illegality to a strike which has not been sanctioned by the leadership, hasn't been agreed upon by the leadership, is a violation of the sacred contract that was imposed upon the workers by the owners of the means of production. Well, there has been a great rash of this kind of strike in France, particularly among the railway workers and the young militants who came out into the arena in the May-June actions, have identified with these struggles. So the Communist Party has expressed great umbrage at these strikes. **L'Humanité** (*the French CP daily*) scored the growing rank-and-file job walkouts - they challenged the railway workers: "What you are doing is playing into the hands of the administration of the railway and the government by creating these difficulties, in a sense provoking them." So they call for class peace. That's what the Communist Party says in **L'Humanité** - it's got a good name, you know, "humanity," which was the name which was first established by the CP in its revolutionary days in France; but obviously now it is speaking in the words and interests of the ruling class

of France. And that's what the French CP has become - it's put the ban on May Day, which we are celebrating here tonight.

And perhaps you know also the new Kremlin stooge government in Czechoslovakia, has also imposed a ban on May Day. Well, they held some official May Day affairs; I read a report; they don't get any response from the populace, because the populace is against the stooge government representatives. But imposing the ban on May Day they broke up attempts by Czech youth, students and unionists, to pay tribute to the memory of Jan Palach, the young student who immolated himself as an inspiration to Czech youth to carry on the struggle for workers' democracy in Czechoslovakia. They broke up that demonstration, and there was a report in the press that at Pilsen, in the midst of an official May Day demonstration, where one of these petty bureaucrats talked in the words in international labor solidarity, when two hundred youths interjected "End censorship - Freedom of speech in Czechoslovakia!" which seems to me to be a very basic demand, which socialists subscribe to totally and absolutely, the concept of freedom of speech, these youths were harassed and pushed out of the way, and suppressed.

And so I think I can say that the Fourth International, of all the international workingmens' organizations, is the only international which celebrates May Day in its full and absolute meaning.

What set the tone - I am not going to go into any great detail on the Fourth International Congress - I'd like to say a few words on what set the tone at that congress. What set the tone was the presence of a very important group of delegates. They were a small number - I think there were about eight delegates - but in my opinion the most significant persons on the political arena today. That was the presence of the delegates of the newly organized Communist League of France. And who was the Communist League of France - perhaps some of you know them as the JCR (*Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionnaire*) . They were the young militants and students and youthful workers who moved out boldly in the May-June events, and - the bourgeoisie used this word to describe them - they were the "detonators" of the most massive demonstration of working-class militancy that has taken place since World War 2. If you recall, just a year ago, eleven million workers in France came out in a General Strike, and that General Strike, make no doubt about it, posed in the sharpest way, the question of power in France. That's what that League was, and that's who those young people represented. A relatively small organization, grouped around a paper called **Rouge** - "Red."

It was the rallying point of the students and workers, the militants who initiated the struggle, who were the vanguard of that struggle. Everybody knows it. There has been dozens of pocket books, perhaps you have read some of them. Penguin put out one of these books, and I think Fawcett put out one - describing the great May-June events - the most significant events, everybody understands that, I think even Herbert Marcuse understands that. I think he has come to realize that it is the working class, in spite of all his other perambulations, and the traditional Marxist concept that they are **the** revolutionary class in society, not the students - the decisive class, not the intellectuals - not the technocrats, none of these elements, but it's the **working** class. I think in terms of the Winnipeg General Strike you'd say that "horny handed sons of labor" -- they're the decisive force in the population, and they're the revolutionary force, that's capable, with the aid of the technocrats, with the support of the students - I don't want to denigrate their participation in it, but the working class are the decisive factor. That's what they demonstrated - there's a lot of doubt about that, you know. All kinds of commentators were saying you know, the working class are fat, integrated into the apparatus of capitalism, the students are the militant element - and you cannot deny, I have no intention of denying the militancy of the students - but they were putting forward the idea that the workers are passe, that Marxism is outdated, and in this resounding thunder-clap in May-June in France, the truth was validated. That the working class, such as came out in Winnipeg in its massive demonstration in 1919, that working class remains as the class that has the mission to destroy capitalism and build this new society, which we aspire to see built.

And it was the participation of the representatives of the Communist League who were at that Congress that gave to me the greatest significance of that Congress. Now, in France, a key country in continental Europe, there is a body of revolutionary socialists who have had an experience - a revolutionary experience, who have now generalized that experience, adopted the concept of democratic centralism, adopted a revolutionary program and affiliated to the Fourth International. That was the beginning - in May-June - of the French Revolution and now I think we can say that it is the beginning of a development for an alternative pole in Europe to the Communist Parties which are nothing but reformist parties to the core, to the social-democratic parties which are really petty-bourgeois parties in France, and non-socialist, non-revolutionary.



The revolutionary French Trotskyist youth set the pace

And so now we are moving toward a qualitatively different situation, because you should know that France is an important factor in the radicalization of the entire European working class. I know that the students' action in France has had a big impact in the United States, and in Canada; it was an inspiration to all kinds of workers. As a matter of fact when I was in Edmonton, Ritchie Calder, a very eminent scientist in Britain, was giving a speech and he talked about this radicalization, and he ascribed the radicalization to the TV - instant communication; well, that's an important factor, but what did they communicate? They communicated the May-June events on a big scale, and he commented about how he had attended a session in Ottawa a while ago, of Eskimos and he said it was almost imitative; their actions were, it was almost clichés what they were demanding; they were demanding what others were demanding, but of course conditions were somewhat similar, and conditions being essentially similar, the demands were very similar. And this has been the impact of the May-June events and the impact of the youth who were in the JCR and who are now organized in the Communist League and are part of the Fourth International.

Now this Congress, over a period of eight days, was involved in very intense deliberations over all the major problems of the worldwide struggle of our class. It discussed many documents on the basis of the experiences of the various persons contributing them. There was a discussion on the Latin American struggle - very important struggle, the discussion on an attempt to measure and weight the significance of the great Cultural Revolution in China; there was a discussion on a major document on the significance of the new rise and militancy of the youth on an international scale, but there was one document which will be published very shortly which I think you should all be acquainted with, which summed up the essence of this Congress. The document is called "The new rise in the world revolution."

And I will just say a few words about that document. We said that - the collective opinion of the delegates is that - in the past year, May Day 1968 to May Day 1969, and that's what we do on May Day, you know, we try to draw a balance sheet of our past experiences; that's a very good and very healthy thing to do on all our parts - sometimes we are told you should do it on New Year's, you know, we should talk about our relations to our wives, our kids and our boss; but you know, for socialists, it's May Day, the birth of a new year. This is when we try to assess, what became of the past year, and where are we going. Well, the assessment of the delegates at the Fourth International Congress was that the past year was witness to a very decisive new rise of revolutionary struggles in all the main three sectors of the world revolution. A decisive rise - for instance in the colonial world, all of you must remember the great Tet Offensive, launched by the National Liberal Front in Vietnam. That was a most significant action, as a matter of fact the American military machine have never recovered from this - never recovered from this. There was this tremendous reserve in the peasantry and workers of Vietnam, North and South Vietnam, which was roused up, and which repelled the most fantastic and most brutal military machine that has ever been got together in world history. Simple people, with limited equipment, with a great will to sacrifice, moved out and turned back, or at least demonstrated in a very decisive way, that the masses of this country are opposed to American imperialism and that they are prepared to fight to the very end. And that offensive I think must have convinced many of us who followed that event with great anticipation and identity, that the Vietnamese people will win. I think that this is so.

Then there has also been this great qualitative change in the relationship of class forces in the capitalist sectors of the world. I won't develop that further because I think the most significant event in that respect was the French events of last May-June of last year. . . *(tape recording ends)*

